

*Delaware Down Under:
An Archaeological
Journey Along State
Route 1*

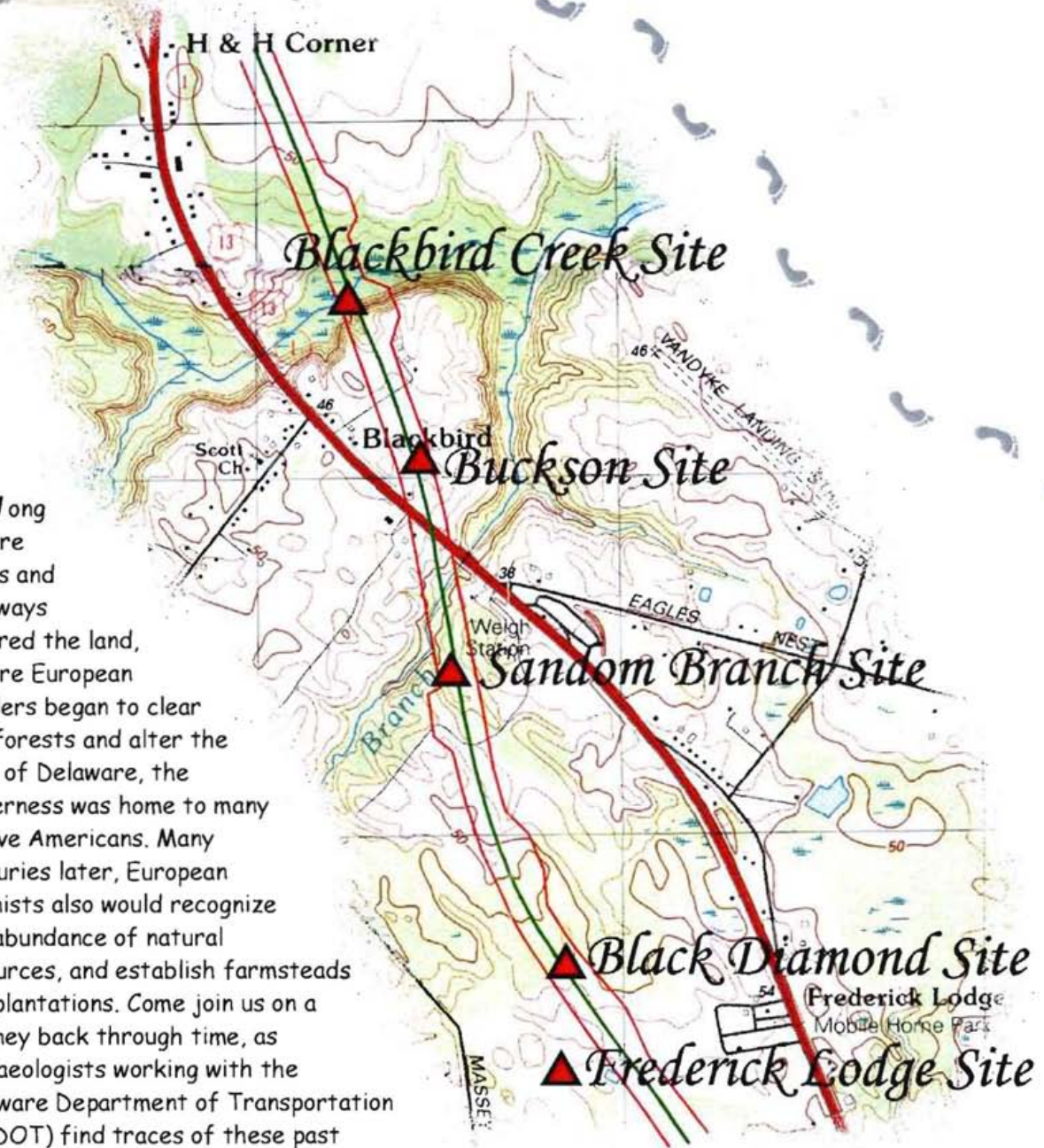


DelDOT



PARSONS

Long before cities and highways covered the land, before European settlers began to clear the forests and alter the face of Delaware, the wilderness was home to many Native Americans. Many centuries later, European colonists also would recognize the abundance of natural resources, and establish farmsteads and plantations. Come join us on a journey back through time, as archaeologists working with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) find traces of these past cultures, shrouded in the passages of time along the State Route 1 corridor



We begin our

journey north of Smyrna in a vast, 32-acre agricultural field where a group of Native American campsites called the **Frederick Lodge Site Complex** is located. Some 9,000 years ago, a group of ancient Native American hunter-



gatherers stopped on the northeast banks of two ponds, or "bay/basins", to make, repair and resharpen stone

tools. By 3,000 years ago, Woodland groups were excavating pits and building firepits, also leaving behind debris from their workshops.

Only a few hundred feet north of Frederick Lodge, an ancient Native American group camped near another small "bay/basin" at the **Black Diamond Site**. Like their neighbors at Frederick Lodge, these people excavated pits and built fires, but their tools were manufactured from a unique kind of grey and red quartzite.



Reconstruction of a house structure, at the Iron Hill Museum



Our trip continues northward less than a mile to the **Sandom Branch Site Complex**. The



terraces above Sandom Branch have revealed the remains of pits, tools, and pottery vessels



left behind around 1,500 to 500 years ago. Pottery was made here, with quartz/mica or sand mixed in the clay, and decorated by pressing fabric or cord-wrapped sticks into the wet clay.

We now arrive at the bluff above Blackbird Creek, where Native American groups at the **Blackbird Creek Site** made arrow points and early forms of pottery. The presence of storage



pits suggests that these inhabitants intended to stay longer than a few days, and planned to store tools and other types of resources. The undecorated pottery was made with steatite or hornblende mixed in the clay. Part of a carved soapstone bowl found may have been brought to the site to be crushed and used to make pottery.



Many centuries later, the rich river valleys and fertile soils also drew European colonists. By the 17th century, the land was a checkerboard of farmsteads and plantations. Most of these landholdings began as royal land grants, issued to individuals before our nation's independence. The **Jones Site** is one of those holdings, tracing its origins back to a grantee, Mathew Corbit, in



1705. This site contains a brick clamp, a manufacturing area for the local production of bricks, one of only two such sites excavated in Delaware. The **Blackbird Creek Site** was being worked by grantee Edward Fitzrandolph as early as 1737, and contains ceramics dating to that time. The **Buckson Site** was continuously occupied throughout the 19th century.

Our tour concludes to the south at the **Little Heaven Archaeology Laboratory**, where the artifacts are identified, counted, sorted, cataloged and displayed. Now, archaeologists begin the fascinating task of unraveling the mystery of each site, and weaving yet another piece of the tapestry that is the history of Delaware.



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